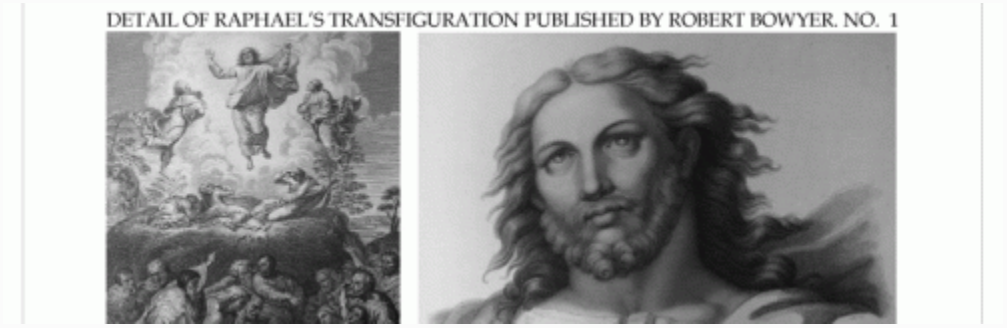
Phillip Medhurst



Many of the prints in the Bowyer Bible (a grangerised Macklin Bible) have been made available online by myself – Revd. Phillip Medhurst (b.1948). For me these two great Bibles are not primarily objects of academic study. Instead, I see myself as carrying on the work of men such as Thomas Macklin and especially of Robert Bowyer: namely, to spread abroad the Word of God as mediated by artistic genius. The 21st century phenomenon of the internet provides an opportunity undreamt-of by the two publisher-collectors to do this, and has enabled me to see myself as carrying on the work they began.

At the time of their first uploading to Wikimedia Commons (from 2008 onwards, to a site which back in the day transcended the phenomenon embraced by the current cliché of "social media") these images were the only photos of many of the prints to be readily found anywhere. Anyone wishing to view originals must still go to places such as Bolton and ask for the volumes such as the Bowyer Bible to be taken down individually from their case and opened one at a time. The engravings in The Macklin Bible are in fact all now (2026) available online – raised up, no doubt, by aspiring academics who have seen the Bowyer Bible prints at various places online and in particular on Wikimedia since 2008. With the rapid improvements in internet technology even since then, the site images (eg. from the John Rylands Library) are of an exceptional quality, so there is little incentive to grapple with oversize tomes in provincial locations. The work, however, of putting these images before the public for them to enjoy and to use as they ethically wish to do so remains a worthwhile evangelistic endeavour, if only because other media have overtaken what is now seen as an obsolete technology in the service of an equally obsolete world view. But for those such as myself who have grappled with the latter have come to value the things of enduring universal value enshrined in the former.

My explicit association with the images continues, echoed by publications available on archive.org and Flickr and even superficial vehicles such as Pinterest, and this facilitates a guardianship against disrespectful

modification and commercial exploitation of public domain material, with AI image-modification in particular since 2025 requiring constant vigilance, since it pays scant, if any, regard to the huge efforts of painters and print-makers, and the often breathtaking engagement with the Word of God which we now often take completely for granted in western culture – even if we award it the casual clichéd praise of being “iconic”.

Since 2021 others have ploughed the field in order to grow their own academic profile in overflowing heaps of PDF text. Their input is welcome if it serves to credit the monumental efforts of the Christian artists (eg. Jan Luyken) and collector-publishers (such as Robert Bowyer) who are undoubtedly smiling down from their heavenly institutes on the gospel light radiating from the (secular) lamp-stand of WordPress: unwittingly *ad majorem Dei gloriam*.

Revd. Phillip Medhurst

pro requie animae Oliver Medhurst 1973-2025